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TRAINING OF AFRICAN SPECIALISTS IN PLANNING, STATISTICS AND DEMOGRAPHY

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TRAINING OF AFRICAN SPECIALISTS IN PLANNING, STATISTICS AND DEMOGRAPHY

I. Introduction

1. In recognition of the need to achieve measures of self-reliance in the economic and other spheres, the Summit of the African Heads of States and governments stressed the importance of trained manpower as an input to activities in the various production sectors and support services. In fact, Africa's greatest asset is its human resources. Thus full mobilization and effective utilization of the labour force for national development and social progress should be a major instrument of development. Given the immense nature of the task of training to be accomplished with regard to training, lack of training facilities in some fields and scarcity of financial resources, the Summit recommended meaningful co-operation among member States in developing and utilizing specialized regional, subregional and multinational training and research institutions for training nationals in specialized skill areas, using wherever possible, existing national institutions as a base.

2. It is in this spirit, that it was felt that there was a strong need for the establishment of training institutions which could help African countries collectively to develop their capabilities and infrastructure essential in the field of planning, statistics and demography. This joint paper was recommended by the Second Session of Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers to highlight the main issues of training of specialists in these fields, to pin-point the problems which prevent the regional institutions in these fields to properly implement their goals and to sketch their prospects in the future.

II. Training of specialists in planning

2.1 Objectives

3. There are several centres in Africa in charge of training specialists in planning, but the most important is the Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) located in Dakar (Senegal). IDEP was established nearly two decades ago by the United Nations under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). Its objectives are:

- To transmit the various and alternative theories and techniques with appropriate assessment, qualifications, extension and modifications to as to suit African development planning;
- To train African planners in analysis and research of the problems of African development, and;
- To provide advisory services to African governments in the areas of economic development and planning.

4. The Institute is to draw its trainees from among the serving officers of the Ministries, Departments and Commissions of National Planning. African planners are trained to be able to influence decisions on the question of Africa's dependence, independence, or interdependence, or Africa's monoculturism, diversification or specialization in her own economic interest.

5. The recent changes in the objectives and rationale of the Institute's activities aim among other things at assigning to IDEP a more substantive and effective role in the design, monitoring and implementation of African regional, subregional and national development strategies and objectives whether sectoral or comprehensive as spelt out inthe Lagos Plan of Action.

2.2 Training facilities

6. To achieve the above objectives, IDEP carries out a training cycle of two year's duration leading to an M.A. degree in development planning. The cycle is divided into three autonomous yet interrelated parts viz.

(i) The nine-month basic programme in development and planning

7. The main purpose of this programme is to train participants in how to plan and design policies in general at macro sectoral and project levels. The whole programme contents include basic economics and courses introducing trainees to overall economic conditions in Africa. Candidates who successfully complete the programmes will be awarded the IDEP diploma in development and planning. Others are given certificates of attendance.

(ii) The three-month specialization programmes

8. The programmes aim at providing specialized, more advanced training in certain areas, sectors or disciplines which are of particular importance to Africa. More emphasis is given to operational tools and techniques to concrete studies and empirical investigations.

(iii) The six-month research training programmes

9. Under this programme, M.A. candidates are trained in research methods through the preparation of a research monograph under the supervision of the Institute's staff. In this regard, planning and policy design related research, applied to Africa is particularly emphasized and encouraged in this programme.

2.3. Requisite inputs and problems encountered

(i) Staff

10. For IDEP to function effectively, the number of the teaching and research staff at all levels must reach the equivalent of 10 man-year generally, i.e. about double the present level. Presently, the Institute's work is seriously hampered if not rendered impossible by insufficient teaching staffs and research assistants, documentalists, library staff, data processors, etc.

(ii) Finance

11. One of the most leading constraints on the implementation of IDEP's goals has been the inadequacy of financial resources. This is so not only in terms of the quality of financial resource in flows, but also in terms of its overtime stability. Financial resources fluctuate widely from one year to the other, and within each year there is no guarantee of the timing of their actual receipt of funds. The most recent crisis in which IDEP finds itself in is the drastic reduction of UNDP contribution which amounted to $1.3 million and $1 million in 1982 and 1983 respectively and will be only $750,000 in 1984. On the other hand government contributions are not compensating such a drop. Under such circumstances, planning of the Institute's activities in a steady and sustainable fashion becomes a hazardous task with a great detriment to the quantity as well as quality of its services.

(iii) Material infrastructures

12. The Institute is presently located in an old building which does not lend itself to comfortable working conditions. If infrastructural facilities were expanded as planned, IDEP could have a student population of 100 or more. Moreover, the Institute lacks equipment such as printing and computer facilities.

(iv) Recognition of Institute's academic degrees

13. The problem of the classification of IDEP's Diplomas in African civil services and that of their recognition by African Universities and other national or international research institutions are still far from being solved. Therefore, a set of institutional arrangements must be initiated to define and work out the modalities and basis for strengthening relations between the Institute and the universities and centres with the aim of enabling IDEP to play an effective role in the latter's activities in training and research in the field of socio-economic development and planning.

(v) Lack of fellowships

14. The other important constraint faced by IDEP is finance to support the student's travel and living allowances. The fellowship funds which had to be provided by the African governments under trainee support schemes are slow in coming as they are released on a year-to-year basis and usually at the last moment. Furthermore, governments are reluctant to use their respective IPFs to provide fellowships to their nationals.

2.4. Prospects

15. The Institute's programmes are based on its five-year plan 1982-1986 which was approved by the ECA Conference of African Planners and Ministers in 1982. The Plan which is based on the aspirations of Africa's leaders as set down in the Lagos Plan of Action and the Monrovia Strategy aims at expanding the IDEP programmes both horizontally and vertically in order to maximize its contributions to the above mentioned objectives in its areas of competence. This is to be realized through a closer tailoring of the Institute's multiple activities particularly training, research and advisory services to the African continent's needs and objectives at both country and multicountry levels as pertaining to the implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action.

16. As regards training, in addition to basic planning course, and requirements, greater emphasis is placed on new sectoral thrusts (namely industrialization in Africa, energy and development in Africa, agriculture and food, human resources and manpower) as well as on the objectives of the Lagos Plan of Action and the assessment of alternative means of realizing them. Similarly in the fields of research the institute's programme aims at playing a greater role in contributing to areas which are of interest in the acceleration of the implementation of the Lagos Plan. As for advisory services, the Institute will assist both African countries and institutions in their efforts aiming at defining their roles and the implementation of the Plan at sectoral and macro-levels, at the country and multicountry levels.

17. However, the implementation of this five-year plan is to be undertaken in collaboration with other interested African Institutions, particularly ECA and ADB and with African research institutes. This would not only avoid any duplication of efforts but would also allow IDEP to benefit from the substantive external economies inherent in collaborative efforts.

III. Overview of the training of specialists in statistics

3.1. Objectives

18. It should be recalled that the Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA) is part of the continuing African efforts to provide opportunities for the training of adequate numbers of qualified staff required to collect, process and analyse the statistics needed for economic and social development. The STPA was adopted by the tenth session of the Conference of African Statisticians in 1977 and became formally established by resolution 9, 300 (XVIII) of the ECA Conference of Ministers in 1978. It was formulated as a 10-year programme which aims at making African self-reliant through:

- producing an increased number of statistical personnel,
- improving and maintaining the quality of statistical personnel already in service.

19. These aims are to be achieved by providing operational support to the participating centres with a view to:

- improving their efficiency,
- developing their courses along more practical lines,
- and ensuring that they become self-supporting.

20. The STPA is a co-ordinated effort between African Governments and relevant institutions on the one hand, and bilateral and multilateral agencies and institutions as well as intergovernmental organizations on the other hand. Its operational activities include:

(i) The provision of adequate numbers of student fellowships for training at the participating centres;

(ii) The support of all statistical training institutions of a regional or sub-regional nature through the provision of fellowships for training of trainers, the recruitment of lecturers and short-term consultants, the

provision of equipment, the assistance in the expansion of facilities and the co-operative development of teaching programmes, particularly by strengthening co-operation among the various training centres;

(iii) The provision of assistance to countries in establishing middle level statistical training programmes;

(iv) The provision of special assistance to African Portuguese-speaking countries in the field of statistical training;

(v) The appropriate dissemination of information on statistical training activities including annual surveys of activities of centres participating in the STPA which cover information on number of students, curricula review, financing and any associated problems.

21. There exists at ECA a regional mechanism which has the overall responsibility for co-ordinating the STPA. Meetings of directors of participating centres both inside and outside the region are convened by ECA once every two years for discussions on programme organization, development of curricula, the need for specialized courses, financial problems, etc.

3.2. Training facilities available and their adequacy

22. The STPA comprises presently 15 member centres and 5 associate centres. The 15 member centres are the following:

English-speaking centres

- Department of Statistics, University College of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana
- Department of Statistics, University of Ibadan, Nigeria
- Department of Statistics and Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER), University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana
- Department of Statistics, National University of Lesotho, Roma, Lesotho
- Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre (EASTC), University of Dar-es-Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania
- Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics (ISAE), Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda
- Regional Institute for Population Studies (RIPS), Legon, Ghana

French-speaking centres

- Centre européen de formation des statisticiens économiste des pays en développement (CESD), Paris, France
- Collège statistique, Ecole nationale d'économie appliquée, Dakar, Senegal
- Ecole nationale supérieure de statistique et d'économie appliquée (ENSEA), Abidjan, Ivory Coast

- Institut africain et mauricien de statistique et d'économie appliquée (IASEA), Kigali, Rwanda
- Institut national de statistique et d'économie appliquée (INSEA), Rabat, Morocco
- Institut de statistique, de planification et d'économie appliquée (ISPEA), Yaoundé, Cameroon
- Institut des techniques de planification et d'économie appliquée (ITPEA), Algiers, Algeria
- Institut de formation et de recherche démographiques (IFORD), Yaoundé, Cameroon

23. RIPS and IFORD are basically demographic training centres but they were admitted as members of STPA in 1982 on the recommendation of the second session of the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers.

24. The 5 associate STPA centres are the following:

- Centre for Advanced Training in Applied Statistics for Developing Countries, Munich, Federal Republic of Germany
- Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Hague, Netherlands
- Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, United Kingdom
- Applied Statistics Research Unit, University of Kent, United Kingdom
- International Statistical Programmes Center (ISPC), Bureau of the Census, Washington, United States of America.

25. The associate centres offer specialized short-term training courses and seminars for practising statisticians. Other statistical training facilities are also available within the region but they are mainly for national use. There exists about ten of them in Nigeria.

26. According to the information available to ECA, for the next ten years at least the STPA centres will need to increase their output by about half. To meet the output requirements, it will be necessary to increase the number of persons currently under training by about 50 per cent. More up-to-date information may come out of the current UNDP/ACP/ECA joint study of statistical training needs for Africa.

27. Training at the middle level should normally be carried out at the national level and, as more qualified professional staff become available, this should form an integral part of the programme of national statistical services.

3.3 Technical, financial and other administrative problems encountered

28. Item 16 of the agenda for the third session of the Joint Conference deals specifically with selected issues and problems on the development of STPA. However, it would be useful to indicate here some of the problems encountered in the implementation of the programme. One of these relates to the non-availability of student fellowships for training at the STPA centres. It has been found that a

number of successful candidates could not join the centres because they could not obtain fellowships on time. This is often due to the fact that the national authorities, although they proclaim that statistics is among the priority areas, do not allocate adequate resources for statistical development and training, either from the national budgets or from the external resources made available to them. Another reason is that the procedures for fellowship applications take sometimes a long time and are not well known by the national statistical services and the candidates.

29. Another problem concerns the absence of proper manpower planning at the national level. Therefore the available estimates on statistical training needs may be far below or beyond the actual requirements. Appropriate surveys on statistical training needs should be undertaken periodically by the national statistical services. Such surveys should cover all sectors: Government, parastatal and private.

30. Several centres participating in the STPA are understaffed. In order to handle the larger numbers of trainees, it was estimated that the STPA centres will need to increase their teaching staff by more than 60 per cent. This reflects the awareness of the need to improve teaching quality and to develop research activities and possibly also to provide service courses for other departments of universities. This increase should be dealt with through the provision of adequate numbers of fellowships for training of trainers and the recruitment of lecturers and visiting lecturers to replace temporarily the fellows under training.

31. At the time the STPA was established, professional training was identified as the highest priority. While there is still an urgent need to increase the number of professional staff available to the national statistical services, it was found that the position concerning the middle level staff was worse in many countries. This is due to the fact that the countries of the region had not made the necessary efforts to establish or develop facilities for the training of middle-level personnel including in-service training at the national level.

3.4. Future directions

32. The report of the joint EEC/ACP/ECA Study of Statistical Training Needs for Africa will be available for the consideration of the Joint Conference. It is expected that the findings of the study will guide the future work under STPA.

33. In particular, African Governments are urged to translate into concrete action the priority that they give to statistics by allocating adequate resources, both from national and external sources, for financing national statistical development programmes, including training.

34. The various bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, interested in statistical training, should improve and facilitate their procedures for awarding fellowships, providing lecturers and visiting lecturers as well as equipment for the centres, assisting in the expansion of physical facilities as necessary, etc. Due attention should be given to the establishment and/or development of facilities at the national level for middle level training.

35. Finally, more emphasis should be put for the time being on the national projects to be established by Portuguese-speaking African countries, especially in connexion with the in-service statistical training.

36. The Joint Conference is invited:

(a) to consider the most effective way of mobilizing national and external resources for the expansion and improvement of statistical training;

(b) to advise on ways and means of making the courses at the STPA centres more relevant to the needs of the countries.

IV. Training of specialists in Demography

4.1. Objectives

37. There are two demographic training institutes in the region namely the Institut de Formation et de Recherche Demographiques (IFORD) located at Yaounde, Cameroon and the Regional Institute for Population Studies (RIPS) located at Accra, Ghana. The former serves the French speaking African countries whereas, the later serves the English speaking African countries. Both institutes were established in 1972 due to the acute shortage of persons with adequate training to undertake Demographic and Population related work in the Africa region. The basic objectives of the courses offered at these institutes are as follows:

(i) To give students a solid theoretical training in demography which will enable them to analyse and interprete demographic data;

(ii) To give students practical experience in data collection;

(iii) To give students an understanding of the interaction between population and economic and social development;

(iv) To introduce students to the tools of demographic research.

38. The secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa continues to be fully responsible for the management of the two institutes, a responsibility it took over during 1980-1981, pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 32/179. The ammended statutes for both institutes were approved by the Eight Meeting of the Conference of Ministers held in Tripoli in April 1982 and by decision 37/444 of 21 December 1982 by the General Assembly of the United Nations. The statutes provide for the regionalization of both institutes. Such regionalization is presently in progress.

4.2. Training facilities

39. At IFORD the main training activity continues to be a two year course leading to the Diplome d'Etudes Demographiques whilst at RIPS there is a one year course leading to a General Diploma in Demography followed by another one year course leading to a Master of Arts degree in Demography.

40. Between 1973 and 183, IFORD admitted 148 students. Out of this figure 133 successfully completed the two year course. During the period 1972 to 1982 RIPS admitted 276 students into the General Diploma course. Of this figure 201 successfully completed the one year diploma course. During the same period 81 of the successful diploma students were admitted into the Master of Arts Course. Of this figure 33 have been awarded the degree, 5 theses have been passed subject to revision, 9 theses have been submitted for examination and work is going on on 24 theses.

41. During the next four years IFORD plans to admit 20 students annually an average of less than one student annually from each of the 25 countries served by the institute. So far only 17 of these countries have had students trained at the institute.

42. During the next four years RIPS plans to admit 30 students annually into the General Diploma course and about ten students annually into the Master of Arts Course. Action has however been initiated to transform the General Diploma into a Master of Arts degree and the Master of Arts into a Master of Philosophy degree. RIPS has also received students from all the 19 English speaking African countries.

4.3. Other activities

43. IFORD organizes annually a training session which introduces participants to research methods. These participants are usually graduates from the two year IFORD diploma course. The training session lasts for one year and the students conduct individual research work under the supervision of more experienced demographers. Since 1976-1977 an average of three demographers have taken this training session each year.

44. IFORD also organizes at the national level short-term middle level courses lasting for about 6 weeks, on demography and social statistics. In addition to this IFORD organizes training sessions lasting for about 4 weeks, based on a particular theme which is of interest to demographers, working in African countries. Such courses can be seen as refresher courses which also give demographers the opportunity to present the results of research work they are engaged in. The first such training session was organized at IFORD in July 1981 and the second one in November 1982 in Bordeaux (France).

45. Lastly IFORD has since January 1979 published a tri-annual newsletter which disseminates information on demographic research work and related activities carried out in the region.

46. In addition to its normal training programme RIPS has assisted in the execution of ad hoc training programmes for middle level personnel in the countries it serves. It is hoped that each year two courses for the training of middle or lower level support personnel will be conducted in the countries. It is also planned that two courses for population experts which deal with specialized fields of population will be held each year. One such course was held in July 1983 with mortality as its theme.

47. RIFS has also been very active in the field of documentation and information dissemination. It publishes three newsletters and one abstract journal. The three newsletters give information on the work of the institute, on work going on in the population field in Africa and on developments in the Population Information and Documentation System for Africa (PIDSA). "PIDSA abstracts" a bi-annual abstracts journal is also published.

48. RIPS has also beenable to undertake advisory services to at least six African governments as well as to some international organizations like the World Health Organization and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

4.4. Problems encountered

49. IFORD has faced problems in the development of its research activities. This is because of the priority given to training and the lack of resources for research. Research at IFORD has also been hampered until now by the lack of data processing facilities. A solution to this problem is now being worked out. The institute needs greater financial resources as well as personnel to undertake research. In the coming years research work at IFORD would concentrate on the processing and analysis of the data collected from the urban surveys on infant and child mortality carried out in 5 African cities.

50. IFORD has also faced administrative and financial management problems. It is hoped that with the appointment of a competent administrative and finance officer the situation would improve.

51. At RIPS, both staff and students have had to contend with the difficult economic conditions in the host country. The lack of data processing facilities at the institute has hampered the training and research activities of the institute. The institute also needs greater financial and personnel resources to cope with its responsibilities in the areas of teaching, research, publishing, advisory services and information dissemination.

4.5. Prospects

52. For the future the institutes plan to continue with their training and research work. The need for personnel with training in population matters is still great in African countries. At present the institutes are being regionalized and it is expected that the member governments will contribute financially to the running of the institutes. However, the prospects do not seem very bright. In respect of IFORD only 5 of the 25 countries served by it have contributed to the institutes budget for the years 1982 and 1983. At RIPS, the regionalization process has been even slower and the new enlarged governing council has still not met. It is now scheduled to meet early in 1984. In addition to this the main funding source of the institutes, the United Nations Funds for Population Activities has decided to reduce its funding level of the institutes by about 19 per cent in 1984 in comparison with 1983. This will pose considerable problems to the functioning of the institutes. With the reduction in UNFPA funds and the low receipt of funds from the African countries, the institutes have found themselves in an increasingly precarious financial state. It is hoped that solutions will be found such that the future efficient functioning of the institutes is not jeopardized.

V. Conclusions

53. The principle of co-operation and collective self-reliance which African States have adopted recognizes in respect of human resources training and utilization that African countries must first help themselves individually and collectively in striving for survival and progress. Such goals could only be achieved through strong and unwavering support of African governments, both directly and indirectly, to the training of specialists inter-alia in the fields of planning, statistics and demography. African governments contributions to and support of the Pan-African institutions in charge of teaching and research in these fields not only is a national duty but also a most profitable investment for the African continent. African governments should also pay due attention to the training of middle level staff who are the backbone of the offices responsible for planning, statistics and demography. The number of staff needing training at this level is such that training facilities should be established and/or expanded wherever possible on a national basis to meet the demand.

54. However, international support in human resource development is also welcome as supplementary to the African self-reliant effort. Such assistance should be seen and regarded as reinforcing the national, regional and multinational human development efforts that African States must make in order to further development and progress. In this effort, the continued and active collaboration of all international agencies within the UN system and other international, inter-government and non-government bodies should be effectively mobilized in support of national subregional and regional effort for human resource development and utilization in the fields of planning, statistics and demography.